

The “Tri-Cities Station” which will serve Yorkville, is closer to becoming a reality.

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Metra inching closer to Oswego

By Jenette Sturges

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Two contracts approved by the Metra Board of Directors are a signal that a commuter train is still inching — however slowly — down the tracks to Oswego.

The Metra board last week approved about \$1.8 million in contracts to study the feasibility of extending the Burlington Northern Santa Fe line from Aurora to Oswego, with a possible stop in Montgomery.

According to a Metra spokesman, the contracts include \$350,000 to HDR Engineering Inc. for an environmental assessment of the project, and nearly \$1.5 million to Bowman, Barrett and Associates for preliminary engineering work over the next four years. The two contracts will be paid for with federal transportation funds that were earmarked specifically for the Oswego Metra project, according to the spokesman, who called the studies a “use it or lose it proposition.”

While the awards are good news for Kendall County commuters who must now drive or use the park and ride to get to the downtown Aurora station, the work is no guarantee of the extension of Metra service.

Metra announced in August that they intended to award the two contracts. In the months since local officials, including U.S. Rep. Randy Hultgren, have suggested seeking an Amtrak stop instead in the short term, which would require neither laying new track nor having Oswego join the Regional Transportation Authority, which oversees Metra.

Oswego Village President Brian LeClercq said he’s keeping an open mind to all options. “We have to keep all our options open, but we’ll see what the Metra study reveals,” said LeClercq.

Ultimately, federal, state and local dollars will all be required to get the train on the tracks, but these early studies are an important step, said the Metra spokesman.

“Both studies align with the federal process that would enable further approval,” she said. “The studies would give each of the parties a true idea of how much cost is involved.”

LeClercq said the awarding of the contracts was welcome news. “I’m very excited. It’s been a long time waiting, and hopefully this will start the process for developing a viable transportation option,” for residents of Oswego, Montgomery and Yorkville — “all the people in the area,” LeClercq said.